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AUTHOR Duval, John H.; Carlson, Robert V.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a two-stage case study of teachers and teaching between 1830 and 1988 in Vermont, with particular attention to rural environments. The preponderance of data were in the form of diaries, letters, various types of printed records, monographs, and the transcripts of numerous interviews and conversations. The central purpose of the study was to investigate the nature of commitment and dedication and how these characteristics were manifested in the professional lives of teachers from different periods in time. Based on this study and the results it produced, it seems appropriate to advance the theory that outstanding teachers evidence commitment and dedication as preeminent characteristics of their work ethic or profession. These qualities are not gender specific. Measures of the existence of commitment and dedication include expenses of personal time and personal income. Commitment and dedication are present in mature teachers, suggesting the developmental quality of this attitude. (IAH)

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Dedication/Commitment: A Study of Their Relationship in Teaching Excellence[1]

by

John H. Duval

Castleton State College

and

Robert V. Carlson

University of Vermont

Rarely does a day go by in which the public is not exposed to reports in the media that call for the improvement of education and the need for better qualified teachers. In the minds of the public, the quality of education is inextricably linked to competent teachers. In the minds of educational leaders, the quality of education can not be improved without improving teaching. As Maeroff stated:

> If elementary and secondary education in America improves, it will be more than anything else because of the part teachers play...giving teachers more power is a major way to make them more professional and to improve their performance...(Kappan, March, 1988, p. 475)

Because of the central role of the teacher in school improvement, many critics have wondered out loud about the commitment or dedication of our teachers. In other words, are teachers willing to go the extra mile to provide greater educational opportunities for their students? A good question and one which we attempted to answer; a question that can be answered in part by exploring the nature of teacher commitment and dedication over time.

STUDY PURPOSES

The central purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of commitment and dedication and how these characteristics were manifested in the professional lives of teachers from different periods in time. The major research questions which guided this study were:

1. How are dedication and commitment described by those who write about teaching and portray it in other ways?
2. How are these qualities described by teachers themselves across time?
3. How do commitment and dedication operationally link to teacher professionalism and teaching excellence?

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THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

To develop an appreciation of the nature of dedication and commitment, the work life of European and American missionaries provide a helpful analog. Tales of people continuing their mission in spite of great adversity are common. Abner Wilcox, an American missionary, may serve as an example. He took his family to the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands in the middle of the last century to start a school and continue a mission.

> His salary from the mission was $450.00 per year. For each child he received an allowance of $30.00 for a total income of $600.00. Out of that he fed and clothed his family, kept his horses and other livestock, subscribed to magazines, and bought the books for his library which was Abner's most prized possession. In addition, he was constantly out of pocket for repairs to the house and the school. There was also the considerable cost of denim he bought every year to make shirts and pants for students who couldn't afford them. (Krauss, 1976, p. 26)

Although teachers of today may not be viewed as having to make such a level of personal sacrifice, they often find themselves confronting very challenging working conditions with moderate compensation and a modicum of public support. This seems to be particularly true of teachers who work in rural settings.

It could be argued that due to a scarcity of resources, including lower pay, rural systems might, in particular, be looking for signs of commitment and dedication in prospective teachers. In addition, research of rural areas suggests greater levels of poverty, dependent populations (e.g., young and old), substandard housing, and fewer available and accessible services (Coward, DeWeaver, Schmidt, & Jackson, 1983). Other rural educational research suggests rural schools tend to have: 1) students with lower levels of aspiration (Ayiesworth & Bloom, 1976; Downey, 1980; Edington, 1971; and Nafziger, 1971), 2) less equipment and inadequate facilities (Monk & Haller, 1986 and Ross & Rosenfeld, 1988), and 3) less breadth of curriculum and special services (Monk & Haller, 1986).

Carlson (1991) concluded that rural areas present teachers with a paradox. On the one hand, they identify many strengths of rural environments that seem to provide them with a desired quality of life including a sense of belonging and a sense of personal worth. On the other hand, rural teachers are faced with limited resources and experience a sense of professional isolation. This dilemma further tests a rural teacher's commitment and dedication to serving rural youth. As Cuban (1984) expresses it:

> Persons attached to the classroom see contact with children, appreciate the flexible work schedule while acknowledging the limited financial rewards, and yet still embrace the service

mission of teaching. (p. 243)

Indicators of commitment in a teacher (rural or otherwise) are that teacher's concern for students and the time and energy that teacher has expended in teaching (Glickman, 1986). Providing a further refinement, Glickman portrays commitment in the context of a continuum. A formula was developed in which commitment equals concern plus time and energy and is conceived as a condition being more or less intense depending on how far the individual is along the continuum (See Figure 1). One important variable is the level of concern for students. Teachers with a low level of commitment would have little or no concern for students but a teacher with a high level of concern for students would be more committed.

Insert Figure 1 here.

Glickman's notions about teacher development are heavily influenced by the work of Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1969). Using Kohlberg's model and moving from a preconventional egocentric stage through a conventional law and order stage to a post-conventional altruistic model, Glickman related stage one to a teacher's concern with self-survival. Stage two tended to be occupied by teachers who were concerned about instructional impacts on students and stage three by teachers who were concerned about students and colleagues beyond their immediate classroom (Glickman, 1986).

In a further refinement, Glickman (1986) related commitment to levels of abstraction. In the language of developmental psychology, a teacher moves from concrete to abstract in much the same way as a student moves through development stages (Piaget, 1977). In applying Piaget's theory to adult learners, Glickman argues that teachers are more or less committed to the extent that they operate in the abstract, view the real problems of the professional world in abstract terms, and can detach themselves from the concrete day-to-day life of their job (See Figure 2). In other words, the best teachers are more abstract in their thinking and are capable of watching themselves while they work.

Insert Figure 2 here.

Movement through these stages of teacher development parallels the thinking of Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1966). The findings of both Maslow (e.g., the needs of a lower stage must be satisfied before being motivated at a higher stage) and Herzberg (e.g., elimination of dissatisfiers [i.e., low pay] does not improve an individual's performance but positive factors or satisfiers [i.e., recognition and achievement] do

Figure 1. **Commitment Continuum**

LOW	HIGH
1) LITTLE CONCERN FOR STUDENTS	1) HIGH CONCERN FOR STUDENTS AND OTHER TEACHERS
2) LITTLE TIME OR ENERGY EXPENDED	2) EXTRA TIME OR ENERGY EXPENDED
3) PRIMARY CONCERN WITH KEEPING ONE'S JOB	3) PRIMARY CONCERN WITH DOING MORE FOR OTHERS

CONCERN + TIME and ENERGY = LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

Figure 2. **Levels of Abstract Thinking**

Low	Moderate	High
• CONFUSED ABOUT PROBLEM	• CAN DEFINE THE PROBLEM	• CAN THINK OF THE PROBLEM FROM MANY PERSPECTIVES
• DON'T KNOW WHAT CAN BE DONE	• CAN THINK OF ONE OR TWO POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO PROBLEM	• CAN GENERATE MANY ALTERNATIVE PLANS
• "SHOW ME"	• HAS TROUBLE THINKING THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	• CAN CHOOSE A PLAN AND THINK THROUGH EACH STEP
• HAS ONE OR TWO HABITUAL, RESPONSES TO PBOBLEMS		

motivate individuals to work harder) have been used extensively in motivational research.

Recently, Maslow's hierarchy has been challenged because of its egocentrism by Yankelovich (1981). Yankelovich postulated that a society was emerging where quantity was less of an issue than quality. Such a society will have, of necessity, a different value structure. Predicating many of his conclusions on the notion that one will have to do more with less (a highly cherished rural norm), Yankelovich theorized that sooner or later the psychology of affluence will be forced to yield to a social ethic better suited to the new social realities. This new social ethic will include a renewed emphasis on the social virtues of sharing, giving, committing, sacrificing, participating, and even denying one's own pleasure of the moment (Yankelovich, 1981, p. 311).

Other literature outside of education related to dedication and commitment includes the work of psychologists, economists, and organizational theorists. They often share a view of organizational commitment or dedication as applied to companies and organizations other than schools. Terms such as motivation, commitment, dedication, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and initiative have long held important meaning for business people and students of business and organizational psychology. Kuhn and Geis (1984), writing in The Firm Bond said, "Personal commitment is the psychic knot that ties individuals to institutions, the primal force sustaining the structure of a society" (p.9).

According to Kuhn and Geis (1984) there are both internal and external factors influencing commitment. Personal factors influencing commitment include autonomy, achievement, esteem, power, affiliation, educational level, and locus of control. Organizational factors influencing commitment include goal structure, permeability, leadership, progressiveness, cohesiveness, organizational esteem, and people valuing. Of all of these, however, people valuing may be the most important strength of a corporate employer.

As Kuhn and Geis further elaborated "The theory of cognitive dissonance becomes important during any study of commitment and dedication. Leon Festinger concluded that cognitive dissonance deals with the tension existing when a person's beliefs and behaviors are not in sync" (p. 68). The theory holds that beliefs will change to match behavior in order to reduce dissonance. Cognitive dissonance describes what is really irrational coping behavior. Emotion almost by definition is not logical and, as such, the power to build commitment emotionally is enormous. Laboratory studies testing this theory have often constructed situations where human subjects have been promised certain rewards for performing a task and then have found at the moment that the task was to begin that some of the rewards were to be removed. On many occasions, subjects would actually continue to complete the tasks even with reduced rewards and sometimes

with increased energy or effort.

It has been found that certain factors contribute to commitment and others detract from it. Identification or the melding of interest between person and group makes an important contribution to individual commitment. Indeed, the focus of effort by school leaders in developing a shared sense of vision or mission is to accomplish such a union. Confidence or the belief in the integrity of the organization and momentum as felt in an organization moving forward are of substantial value. Responsibility in terms of the degree of trust given the individual and accomplishment or the sense of fulfillment around task completion conclude a brief list of important factors influencing commitment. Alienation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, worthlessness, and anxiety all work to chip away at commitment. Nothing promotes commitment more than confidence. Kuhn and Geis (1984) point out that achievement is more than money and wealth and that achievers are often dedicated to finishing the work which is often self-assigned. Also, accomplishment is more mental satisfaction than physical reward.

The above reviewed theory plus the work of other educational researchers (cf. Goodlad, 1984; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Rubin, 1987; Schlechty, 1976; and Spencer, 1986) provided a rich conceptual base for examining in greater depth commitment and dedication of teachers particularly in rural settings.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Desig-

This was a study of teachers and teaching between 1830 and 1988 in the State of Vermont which has been the most rural state in United States until the 1990 census. The preponderance of data were in the form of words, diaries, letters, various types of printed records, monographs, and the transcripts of numerous interviews and conversations. A qualitatively structured case study approach was selected as the best way available to manage the data and display them so as to expose new theory. This was an exploratory study with a limited sample and, as such, was designed to determine what questions, if any were worthy of further investigation. As a qualitative study, one of its purposes was to generate theory.

As a two-stage case study, this research sought to apply the methodology of case study to different groups of teachers found in different periods of time. The first stage or Historical Perspective was represented by an analysis and synthesis of accounts written by teachers or by people describing the lives of teachers contained largely in diaries and anecdotal records from the nineteenth and continuing on through

the first two decades of the twentieth century. The second stage or Contemporary Perspective consisted of data collected through interviews with purposefully selected Vermont teachers who are or have worked in Vermont schools from the 1930's through the 1980's. All of these teachers had been previously identified as outstanding and committed to teaching. Consistent with qualitative methodology, the final design of the study was emergent rather that preordinate because, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, "meaning is determined by context to such a great extent...The existence of multiple realities constrains the development of design based on only one construct" (p. 209).

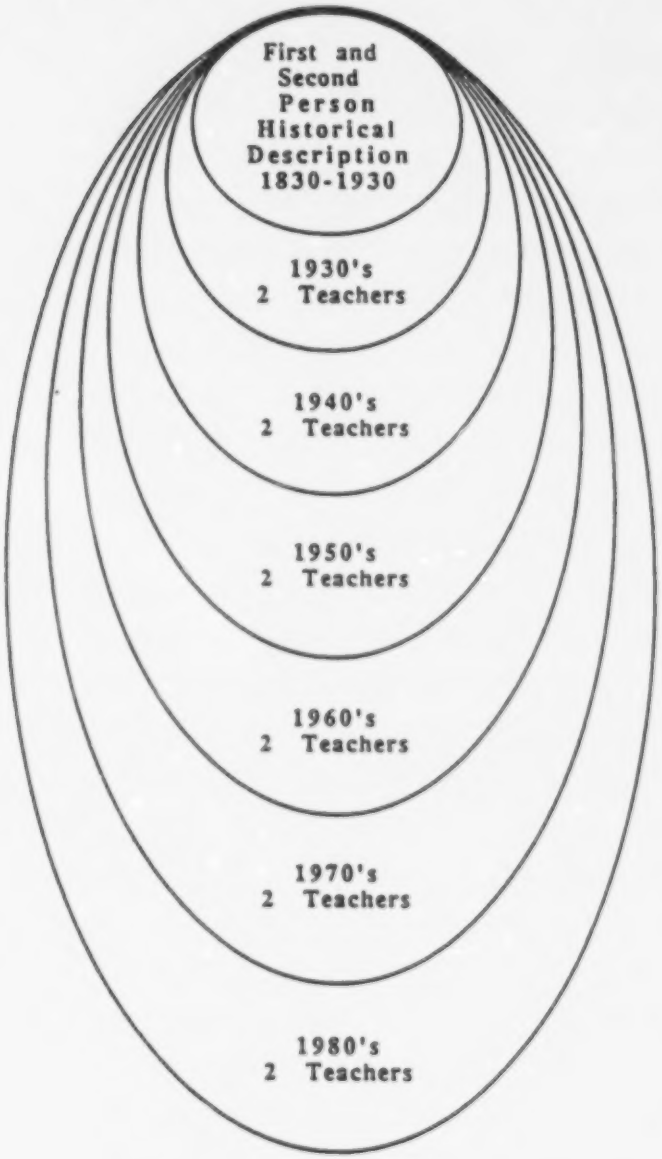
An original pool of nearly 800 Outstanding Vermont Teachers was narrowed to twelve, constituting the purposive sample represented in the Excellent Teacher Universe (Duval, 1990, p. 12). (See Figure 3.) Certain constraints or restrictions or filters were used in the construction of the universe. Teachers chosen had to represent the current proportion of men and women in public school teaching K-12 in Vermont. Teachers were chosen who worked in school districts where the average teacher's salary was below the state average, and teachers were chosen representing school districts where average cost per pupil of an education was below the state average. The resultant sample included two teachers who had taught in each of the decades from 1930 through 1980. These were the teachers interviewed for the second stage of the study.

Insert Figure 3 here.

Data Source

Glaser and Strauss (1967) have suggested that there are two different kinds of qualitative data, field and documentary. Documentary data were the data utilized in stage one of this study. Data in stage two were made up largely of field gathered information. Glaser and Strauss went on to indicate that "every book, every magazine article represents at least one person who is equivalent to the anthropologist's informant or the sociologist's interviewee" (p. 164). Analytical techniques applied to the data included constant comparison and generic theorizing. As themes emerged, they were regularly held up against earlier data to uncover new themes or ways of looking at the data. Although certain themes were generated as a direct result of questions, others emerged from the data themselves. Reasoning took place inductively. Unitizing went on continuously as did categorizing. Although the generalizability of the conclusions was not a concern, the overall credibility was. An attempt was made to make the conclusions creditable, transferable, dependable and confirmable. To accomplish this, particular attention was paid to triangulation, peer debriefing, and the importance of referential adequacy. Member checks were employed.

Figure 3. **Excellent Teacher Universe**



Explanation

A total of twelve (12) teachers were selected and interviewed. Each had been teaching in the decade he/she was chosen to represent.

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STUDY FINDINGS

As mentioned earlier in this paper, this was a two-stage case study. As such, it was engineered to produce a picture or image of variables, dedication and commitment, across time. The research phase of Stage One, Historical Perspectives, took place for the most part in two locations; the archives of the Vermont Historical Society Library in Montpelier, Vermont and the general and special collections of the Bailey Howe Library at the University of Vermont. The research phase for Stage Two, Contemporary Perspective, apart from the review of the literature, consisted of eighteen indepth, semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected Outstanding Vermont Teachers, the verbatim transcription of those interviews, and the subsequent processing of that interview data through recognized qualitative research techniques. Towards the end of the data handling process, the appearance of data in both stages were similar. That is to say, they were represented by printed material on note cards, field notes, analytic memos, and other paper devices which made their parallel handling and co-mingling possible.

Stage One - Historical Perspectives Results

From over a thousand pages of transcripts, library notes and field notes, images of teachers and their work life began to appear spanning over 160 years in the State of Vermont. In the second most rural state in the nation on the eve of its two hundredth birthday, voices of Vermont teachers from decades past and from the present were heard. Theirs was a story of pain, persistence, pathos, poignancy, love, bitterness, loneliness, ingenuity, great wisdom, stress, poverty, isolation, victory, failure, hunger, physical suffering, mental anguish, self- sacrifice, courage, sometimes a magnificent singular sense of purpose, and above all, commitment and dedication. Though the terms themselves are not common in the historical literature, it is clear from the documents that the qualities were there. Indeed, teacher dedication, though frequently used as a descriptor for teachers in modern literature, does not appear anywhere in the research literature. It was this fact in part which stimulated our initial inquiry into this field. Although some research has been done in the area of teacher commitment, that too focused on teachers currently in service and did not afford an historical context. Furthermore, studies to date, although sometimes of significance, it seemed to us were lacking in truly powerful descriptions of this seemingly important variable.

Analysis of data from Stage One elicited several themes which had some currency in the rural one-room schools and small town schools of Vermont for over a hundred years between 1820 and 1930. These included, but were not limited to, loneliness and isolation, inappropriate work sites, severely limited financial resources, lack of professional preparation, low parent and community support, unmotivated students, local power and local control of the educational enterprise, a shift from a male dominated to a

female dominated profession, teachers and teaching not held in high esteem, and the sense of service or mission or doing good work (Duval, 1990, p.116).

Teachers in Vermont in the first half of the nineteenth century were predominantly male. Women were not numerous until 1850. There is some evidence to suggest that teaching was accorded higher status in Colonial America and America before the Civil War than it was after the Civil War. "Teaching was accorded high respectability of a particular kind. . ." (Waller, 1933, p. 12). The author went on to speculate that there was a link, perhaps, between literacy as a desirable condition among men and the puritan ethic of salvation. It was thought important among Protestant churches in the New England of the 1700's and 1800's to be able to read and to write scripture. The teacher almost but not quite approached the status accorded a minister (Waller, 1933). Prospective ministers were sometimes teachers first.

Richard Hofstadter (1962) concluded that by the second half of the nineteenth century, popular attitudes did not call for the development of a strong intellectually respected teaching profession. . . . "Communities preferred to employ transient school teachers or to combine teaching with other public responsibilities like bell-ringing, grave digging, or to hire a minister willing to keep school on the side" (p. 312). Sedlak and Schlossman found, as Waller had, that the vast majority of teachers in the early 1800's were men (Sedlak and Schlossman, 1986, p. 26). By the second half of the century that had changed as both ideology and economics conspired to encourage local authorities to hire young single women as teachers.

On the other hand, Andrew Gulliford, in studying nineteenth century teachers working on the frontier, especially the prairie, wrote glowingly of the qualities he found represented by this group of frontier educators. He also found frontier communities, especially those populated by recent immigrants, to value education highly. "Their esteem for education extended to teachers themselves. Young and old alike looked up to the teacher... to fulfill specific community roles, organize social events, plan debates, create special programs, and exemplify virtue, temperance, and respectability" (Gulliford, 1984, p. 63). On the frontier men teachers were preferred throughout the century, especially during the winter terms, because of the myth that they could control the older farm boys who attended school during the winter term. Indeed, on the western frontier, the ratio of men to women looked different from that of the nation as a whole. It is our feeling that Gulliford's findings in relation to the American west more closely parallel the conditions in Vermont during the nineteenth century. Although significant numbers of women taught in the one room rural schools of the state, especially from 1870 on, there appear, from the historical records, to have been large numbers of men working in those same schools prior to the Civil War.

Calvin Thomas's autobiography published in 1880 served as a framework for portraying the lives

of nineteenth century teachers. Mr. Thomas's rich description of life on the frontier in that period, along with detailed portraits of rural school teaching, offered a particularly rich description of the professional life of teachers in the last half of the nineteenth century.

> I had decided to study law and, with a boy's want of reflection and judgment for at that time I was seventeen years old, I looked upon teaching as a vocation so inferior to that of a lawyer's that I was unwilling to use it even as a steppingstone to somewhat higher calling. (Thomas, 1880, p. 3)

Mr. Thomas was soon forced to change his tune, however, for the need of some income or cash soon led him into the classroom.

> I held my initial conversation with a member of the school committee named Johnson. After a long parlay the bargain was closed and I had engaged to teach for three months, build my own fires, and board around for the sum of eleven dollars per month. Johnson introduced me to his wife as the new schoolmaster and then, in the pursuit of kindling, left me to listen to the account of the shiftlessness of the folks in providing wood for that schoolhouse... She remarked that her husband had to furnish the wood for the schoolhouse and that she only had four children enrolled... (Thomas, 1880, p. 12)

Thomas's biography goes on to talk about drunken parents, undisciplined children, cold schoolhouses, and few, if any, supplies and books. Wood chopping and fire building were often mentioned as necessary skills for frontier schoolmasters. In the end, Master Thomas lost his job for failure to do this properly. During the process of being informed of the reason for losing his first teaching lab, Thomas noted:

> Mr. Thomas, the school committee thinks you should be turned out because first, you refused to chop wood; second, you let the boys tear boards off the schoolhouse and whittle the benches; third, you got mad at scholars and tear their clothes; and fourth, you don't build fires in the morning; and fifth, you don't stay in the place assigned to you to board in at night. (Thomas, 1880, p. 47)

The documents that we consulted describing the life of nineteenth century teachers were full of such stories. Mixed in are rememberings that, when viewed from the position of 1980's, take on a particularly humorous cast. Because a common method of compensating teachers in Vermont and other places in the last century involved the practice of "boarding around" the diaries and journals of our subjects had a fair amount to say about this practice. Mason Stone, in his History of Education in Vermont, published in the 1930's, has a wonderful account of a schoolteacher faced with eating the same basic food for a week. The centerpiece of this series of meals was a large and apparently tough male goose or gander. As a way of

illustrating both the situation and conditions, a couple of days from the teacher's journal are included:

> Monday: Went to board at Mr. B's; had baked gander for dinner; suppose from his size, the thickness of his skin and other venerable appearances, it must have been one of the first settlers of Vermont; made a slight impression on the patriarch's breast. Supper - cold gander and potatoes. Family consists of man, good wife, daughter Peggy, four boys, Poppy the dog, and abrasive cats. Fire built in the square room about nine o'clock and a pile of wood laid by the fireplace; felt squeamish about the stomach and talked of going to bed; Peggy looked sullen and put out the fire; went to bed and dreamed of having eaten a quantity of stone wall.
>
> Tuesday: Cold gander for breakfast, swamp tea and nutcake, the latter some consolation. Dinner - the legs etc. of the gander done up warm - one nearly dispatched. Supper - the other leg. Etc. Cold; went to bed as Peggy was carrying in the fire to the square room; dreamed I was a mud turtle and got on my back and could not get over again. (Duval, 1990, p. 131)

Vermont developed a reputation in the nineteenth century, both in New England and across the nation, as a place where new educational ideas could be developed and flourish. In 1867, Vermont became the second state to establish compulsory school attendance, requiring that children attend school for three months a year between the ages of eight and eighteen. Nineteen years later it became the second state to grant use of school buildings for kindergartens. Thus, the kindergarten movement coming from northern Europe flourished in the Green Mountains before the turn of the century. In 1890, a minimum age for teachers was established and that was 17. It seems young by today's standards but was average by the standards in existence in the 1800's. In 1894, free textbooks for elementary students were provided or required. In 1912, the Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching completed a study within the state. Their report in 1914 led to some changes here and in other places. One such change came about as a result of legislative action in 1915 providing for the organization of junior high schools. Vermont was the first state in the nation to do this and Cabot organized the first such school. (Stone, 1933, p. 99)

In 1777 in the town of Windsor, the founding fathers of Vermont adopted a constitution fully twelve years before such a task was possible at the national level. That document contained a number of unique provisions including the prohibition of slavery. It also included this phrase: "The school or schools shall be established in each town by the legislature for the convenient instruction of youth with such salaries to the masters as deemed appropriate by the town fathers... there shall also be one grammar school in each county." (Stone, 1933, p. 96)

Margaret Tate Carlton taught in rural schools in central and southeastern Vermont for over fifty years.

She began her career in Reading, Vermont during the Civil War and worked at various times in Woodstock, Reading, Townshend, Bellows Falls, and other area communities. After her death in 1919, her children preserved her diary and later edited and added a postscript describing her final weeks on earth. The final page of that diary speaks eloquently to the courage, pain, loneliness, poor living conditions and sense of isolation that could come upon people in rural areas in these days to say nothing of rural school teachers. A section of those final pages reads:

> How it must have pained her that she could not hold her grandchildren on her lap and put her arms around them because of her illness. Margaret had developed consumption, tuberculosis of the lungs, and the doctor had warned her to be careful not to transmit it to others. She took special pains not to infect her grandchildren. Then, in the winter of 1910, tragedy struck. Because of her illness and the infirmities of old age, she and John could no longer live alone. They deeded their farm to Edward and Annie, their children, and moved in with them. Annie was expecting a baby, due to be delivered the latter part of January. It was an especially cold and snowy winter day when her time came. The roads were impossible for any vehicle. The snow drifted to fifteen feet in places. Edward set out on horseback to get the midwife who lived a mile and a half away. He was unable to bring her until the next morning. It was too late. Annie and her baby had died in childbirth. How frightful for Margaret and John, who were both ill and could do nothing to help. What great sadness to know that their only child was dying in the next room. Finally, when John realized what had happened, he said to Margaret, "Margaret, Annie is gone." She replied, "Then I shall go soon." Two days later Margaret T. Carlton and her daughter, Annie Carlton Abbott, were buried in the same lot in the Highland Cemetery, West Woodstock, Vermont. Hers was a simple life, lived among plain, unpretentious people. With all the hardships, doubt about her future, the sadness and sorrow, Margaret Tate lived a full life. She was a faithful friend, a devout Christian, and a devoted wife and mother. She loved nature, the new moon, the chirping of crickets, the mellow notes from the first robin of spring, the great feathery snowflakes, and the ice glistening on the evergreens. She enriched the lives of all who knew her and left her rich heritage for those who followed. (Diary of Margaret Tate Carlton, 1837-1920)

The poignancy of this passage speaks for numerous other educator scribes who recorded their thoughts and feelings decades ago while working in the small rural schools of this country, especially Vermont (Duval, 1990, p. 144).

The voices from the past have echoed recurring themes. The prestige or importance associated with teaching as a profession has waxed and waned over time. It appears that during the nineteenth century what began as a male dominated vocation of some stature in most communities cycled to a low ebb as good teachers became hard to find, continued to decline in value as large numbers of marginally prepared people entered the ranks, and was probably enhanced as a profession with the inclusion of large numbers of women in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although their status as second class citizens cloud this assessment. Although less clear across time, there are high points in the literature of the sense of teaching as service and of doing good work (Krauss, 1976), (Lortie, 1975), (Waller, 1933), (Elsbree 1939), (et. al.). There also appears to be evidence to support the linking of such a mindset among teachers to a corresponding mindset among those aspiring to the ministry.

Relating the amount of money that teachers were paid to the economy of the times in which they worked and extrapolating that data so as to compare it with economic data available today became problematic. There are, however, a number of examples from the literature of procedures such as boarding around and alternative methods of compensation to suggest strongly that the meager cash supplies available to frontier and rural communities in the last century were not shared willingly or freely with school teachers. Indeed, it took a state law in Vermont to eradicate the practice of towns arranging for room and board for their teachers and partial payment for their services. There are examples in the historical literature which reinforce the notion that certain individuals serving as teachers during the last century did so only as a means of supplementing income between farming seasons and/or before they entered the profession of their choice. The conditions which existed in the schools of the last century appear from the literature to have often presented real hardships to teachers, and it was against this background that the second stage of the case study was undertaken.

Stage Two - Contemporary Perspective Results

The focus of the second stage was to look at teachers and teaching in Vermont between 1930 and 1988. Since we were interested in possible connections between commitment, dedication, and teaching excellence, it was incumbent upon the researchers to identify a pool of teachers who were determined to be excellent. Such a group of teachers had already been identified as a result of the University of Vermont's Outstanding Teacher Day program. In existence since 1981, this program had identified in the intervening seven years over seven hundred teachers K-12 from every supervisory union in the state who had, as a result of meeting criteria published by the university, been nominated and selected as Outstanding Teachers. One of the criteria for outstandingness was that they demonstrate commitment as a characteristic of their professional

life. It was determined that two teachers would be selected who had taught in each decade from the 1930's through the 1980's. From an initial population of over seven hundred, a sample pool of fifty was selected who represented the criteria discussed earlier in the Methodology section of this paper. From that fifty, twelve were selected and interviews scheduled.

As explained earlier, because it accurately represented the teaching population in Vermont in the late '80s, two-thirds of the sample were female, one-third male and one-half the sample taught in secondary schools grades 7-12 while the other half taught in elementary schools grades K-6. Prior to the conducting of the interviews, the protocol was piloted twice and, in addition to the twelve interviews used in the study, four additional convenience interviews were conducted at various sites around the state. Thus, there were a total of eighteen interviews. Each interview lasted approximately three hours and a semi-structured format was used. Verbatim transcriptions of each interview ran between thirty and fifty pages.

We were fully aware of the inherent limitations in qualitative sampling techniques such as the ones selected. Obviously, the extent to which we were going to be able to generalize our results was severely limited if, indeed, a potential for that existed at all. On the other hand, we wanted to carefully construct a sample that would be as representative of the teaching population in this state as we could make it, short of randomness. Furthermore, believing that conditions such as hardship and adversity, meager resources, inadequate facilities and low wages which had surfaced as themes in the historical first stages of this study might be useful in delimiting the second stage of the study, we constructed filters of the type described in the methodology. Thus, we had a very particular sample, a purposeful sample, a sample of outstanding/excellent teachers who not only practiced their craft in the most rural state in the nation but did so in some of the most remote and impoverished corners of that state. This remarkable group of men and women were able to lead us much closer to our goal of understanding how commitment and dedication operate in the lives of teachers.

Analysis of the transcripts of the taped interviews when once begun yielded an initial 42 themes and sub-themes. Successive attempts at categorization reduced that number substantially. The process of education kicked out seven major themes under which many of the original categories were subsumed. These were:

1) Definitions of commitment and dedication

2) Time in relation to commitment

3) Spending of one's own money on teaching

4) Teaching as a mission or a calling

5) Dedicated colleagues

6) Teacher effectiveness

7) Teacher enthusiasm

In spite of the rich difference in the answers which all respondents provided to the question related to teaching and commitment, similarities emerged. One of these is the emotional investment expressed on the part of those who responded to the question. The words themselves, commitment and dedication, seemed to trigger an emotional toggle switch which caused respondents to even repeat the words with a certain delicacy and quality not common to the rest of their testimony. Evidence continued to mount, therefore, in support of these terms having meaning for excellent teachers. A lengthy interview one late spring afternoon with a male subject revealed deep feelings about teaching and how he had come to this profession rather late in life with a perhaps unusual zeal and concern for and about teaching as it was and as it should be. When asked about commitment and dedication, he said this:

> I guess it means that the interest of people whom you're trying to serve oft times has to take precedence over your own... For example, when I first came to this job, one of the commitments I made was that I would be available to parents regardless of the time, realizing that often parents are working and have a difficult time making the customary hours that we normally have available to us in this business. So I made sure that if a parent couldn't make it during the regular time, I would be available to them and that's one of those things that I have persisted in and done year after year. Another aspect of commitment is to constantly be looking for ways to create an environment where kids get the best opportunity and the best chance to grow and develop and mature. And that means that you constantly have to be rethinking what you're doing and looking at new options and trying to find ways to do the same thing in a different way rather than to just repeat yourself time and again. I mean, you've got to have an enormous amount of time and energy to give to your colleagues and to your students. Being committed to kids means being committed to parents. I also think there's an element of commitment in terms of the community. I think the job doesn't stop when you go out the door at four or five o'clock or whenever it is. You have other things that you do. And I've served on a number of other boards and advisory councils and committees and on a state task force that all have to do with kids and counseling and intervention and they're all important. (Duval, 1990, p. 238)

As analysis of the data progressed, two themes emerged which we believe make an original contribution to the literature on teacher commitment, the up until now non-existent information about dedication, and

these two hold out the possibility of identifying variables which will yield themselves to quantification. The two variables were teacher time and teacher wealth.

Teacher Time

Data analysis uncovered time as a powerful exemplar of commitment in the minds of the respondents. In order to test the strength of this indicator, the data were reviewed, looking for references to time throughout the complete transcripts of each interview. Question eleven on the protocol asked: "On average, how much time do you spend per week on work related to teaching? When does the school day begin and end for you?" (Duval, 1990, p. 180). This question elicited a variety of responses but it turned out that the independent discussion of time on the part of the respondents provided equivalent, if not more, detail. This suggests that additional research working from a totally unstructured question format might be called for as well as research that would specifically work with time as a variable.

Without exception, teachers in this pool came in on weekends, remained after school at night beyond the contract day, often came in early in the morning, came in for certain days during vacation, and spent time in the school building and in their classrooms during the summer. Although summer occasional work was compensated for by school districts doing curriculum work and special projects, teachers involved in that kind of activity hastened to add that the actual time spent exceeded their compensation. Again, time seems to be a type of currency for these teachers in that they can spend it on their own profession and often see direct payback. Although the data were not analyzed to reveal this, this careful husbanding of time suggests a sense of organization that has been associated with job effectiveness; not only in teaching, but in other professions as well.

Teacher Wealth

Stage Two data consistently showed that teachers spent their own wealth to facilitate learning in their classroom. This seems to suggest that it would be of use to do a more expanded study to determine how common this practice is and how much wealth is often involved. This study showed that the our respondents spent on average from $300 to $3,000 per year of their own income in support of learning in their classrooms. Certainly, the ramifications for such information in relation to average earning power for teachers nationally are apparent. Question ten of the interview protocol asked: "Did you or do you ever spend your own money on your students? Can you give examples?" (Duval, 1990, p. 192). As was the case with time, direct responses on the part of the interviewees to this question were useful but of equal use were voluntary responses which occurred in other sections of many of the interviews. Although less evident than time, there is the feeling that this group of teachers spent their own money knowingly and for maximum

effect. The data suggests to these researchers that being able to secure materials, services, and other things of use to the profession without having to go through a tiring, tedious bureaucratic process is something prized by excellent teachers. It may be connected to the empowerment issue or to a control issue. Here the decision-maker is the teacher, and this is a very different process than the normally bureaucratic requisitions/purchase orders process found in most public schools in the country. Unfortunately, this research could not effectively surface sufficient data on donated items such as used furniture from home in order to get a feeling of how prevalent this was within the teacher population. Future studies could help in determining teacher contributions to the workplace if such data could be collected.

The notion of respondents spending their own wealth gleaned from a profession which has been continually described as underfunded and underpaid suggests images of self-sacrifice and charity much more commonly found within the missionary movement than, perhaps, with other professions. It is useful, therefore, to think of committed and dedicated teachers as those teachers who have, in effect, stepped off Maslow's escalator and have chosen to self-actualize by making a commitment to the profession. They have chosen of sufficient intensity to warrant spending meager resources to enhance one's professional performance. The evidence suggests that those teachers are self-actualizing through this sense of giving. Although suggestive of philanthropy, it is hard to think of it in those terms because of the size of the numbers involved. Again, the quickness with which teachers spend their own monies on their students takes on special meaning when grounded in the overall financial reward system of the teaching profession and the general absence of various types of discretionary monies commonly available in other professions. It may be that future research will show such behavior to be a clear indicator of commitment. Indeed, it would be appropriate for this topic alone to warrant considerable further study.

Teaching as a Mission or Calling

The last major theme to be addressed in this paper is the theme of teaching as a mission or calling. A number of teachers in the sample said they came into teaching as a result of an inner drive or calling. The idea of being called to a service profession is most often found in literature describing religious missionary work. The dual role of missionary and teacher so often found during the nineteenth century American missionary movement perhaps has left a legacy and an impact within the profession extending decades beyond the peak of that movement. Undoubtedly, the responsibility felt by nineteenth century teachers for moral education comes into play. Numerous books of the period devoted to instructing prospective teachers in the art and craft of teaching contain essays on the importance of good moral character and the special role that a teacher plays in a student's life along these lines (Stone, 1936). Such

stereotypes acted even more forcefully among women. Women hired to teach during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of this century were sometimes contractually restricted in their behavior and admonished by their superiors to be moral and upright in all of their dealings (Waller, 1933). To the extent that teachers were admired and/or held up as models throughout the last century and into this, it would seem to be most often in connection with their role as a virtuous emblem of decency, honesty, charity, and general moral goodness.

Thus, from these roots and perhaps from others, emerges the notion of the self-sacrificing teacher driven to do his or her best in spite of the considerable physical and mental constraints. The question remains for these researchers, however, to what extent such an attitude or predisposition might be present in teachers today where the working conditions, one could argue, are considerably less severe and where teachers are not held so severely to the set of moral standards they were held to decades ago. Put another way, if the sense of teaching as mission or calling has that strength or vitality today, it would seem to have to come from a different wellspring.

It is probably true that numerous vocations and avocations in life can come to be for individual participants, "reasons for being." Yet, it is important to recognize that this is true of teachers. For many teachers and a significant majority of the teachers in this interview pool, there was the sense of mission or calling associated with their work. It would be a mistake to equate it with religious zeal. The mission was not that focused. It may be more accurately described as, and these words also suggest religious fervor, a glow or warmth or sense of well being that comes to one when they are speaking of a life's work with which they have been really satisfied. The sincerity and conviction with which these teachers responded led to the conclusion that this was a characteristic worthy of further research. The extent to which commitment as expressed in mission or calling can be connected to success as a teacher was not a question of this study. It is, however, a line of evidence which has emerged. Perhaps there is a connection between the characteristic and effectiveness over time. Further research will be necessary in this area.

CONCLUSION

On the sixth of October, 1987, on the counter of the secretary's office in a mid-size central Vermont elementary school, appeared a picture of a fifth grade teacher who had passed away tragically the year before, leaving the school and the teaching staff with a tremendous void. As people collected their thoughts during the course of that year in an attempt to identify what this kind of change means for a school family, one teacher on the eve of the first anniversary of the teacher's death, placed her picture on the counter and this quote beneath: "A year ago today we lost our dear, dedicated Diana. She always gave us, our children,

and our school her best. Let us dedicate ourselves to giving our best." I interviewed that teacher later that day to gain a better understanding of what she meant by that term. She said:

> It means hard work. It means trying to be the best at what you do. It means being able to motivate excitement in your students and in others. It means being here every weekend. It means putting kids first. It means talking constantly with your colleagues and friends about how things for children could be better. It means caring very much about being the teacher and working hard at being a teacher, harder than anyone you knew. It means always taking courses to improve yourself. It means volunteering for new tasks. It means being a good friend and compassionate to your colleagues and being caring. Diana was intelligent. She loved the arts. She was energetic and inquisitive and she had guts. She was brave and courageous and concerned. She was willing to try new things, to see if they worked, and she was willing to reexamine the implications of her efforts in education and those of her colleagues and parents. She was willing to follow her instincts, which was another kind of courage. All these Diana was and more. (Duval, 1990, p. 241)

Previous efforts to explain the existence and inner workings of commitment and dedication have in the interest, perhaps, of objectivity and adherence to quantitative measures, somehow lost sight of the affective quality of these terms. The voices of the past as well as the voices from the present spoke often with eloquence of the emotional dimension involved in teaching as work. Teaching, for those who have spoken with us, either from the pages of history or for the cassette tapes used to make the transcripts, was more than a job. It was more than a vocation. For many of these teachers, it was a pull, a draw, perhaps a compulsion, a calling. We were impressed by these teachers and were fascinated by what they had to say about teaching. They taught all over the state of Vermont or have taught all over the state of Vermont in poorer than average school systems for less than the average teacher's salary. The schools in which they worked were quite often less elaborate or new or well equipped than those that might be found in the richer urban districts of the state. Yet their enthusiasm was undaunted. They willingly spoke at length about the excitement of their work and its importance. Some were attracted to the rural nature of a state like Vermont, both because of its lifestyle and the special challenges it offered the profession. They were mature. They were able to discuss teaching in abstract and original ways that either directly or metaphorically enriched understandings of terms like commitment and dedication. They were often proud of being selected as an Outstanding Teacher but often equally quick to thank their colleagues, their children, occasionally an administrator, and occasionally a community for providing the wherewithal to obtain the honor.

They ranged in age from 35 to 75 but all appeared youthful and vigorous. They spoke of teaching and their students with a sparkle in their eyes. They appeared focused, purposeful, energetic, and undaunted. To a person they spent large amounts of time outside of the contract day, week, month and year at work in their profession. Many worked long hours on weekends, vacations, and during the summer time to prepare themselves and their classrooms for their students. Of those interviewed, only one spoke at length about the amount of money he or she was paid to teach. At least half the interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents. All of these homes were modest which suggests that at least the majority of the respondents were of modest means, reinforcing the point that salary may not have been a major motivator. In spite of modest means, the data consistently showed that teachers spent their own wealth to facilitate learning in their classrooms. It would be of use to do a much more expanded study to determine how common this practice was across teaching. Certainly, the ramifications for such information in relation to average earning power for teachers nationally are apparent.

For the teachers in this study, teaching was an affair of the heart as well as the mind. It was not unusual for the intensity of response to cause a voice to tremble and quaver. There appeared to be a sense of teaching as calling and teaching as mission. Those respondents who spoke at greatest length about this were also able to recall significant experiences from their childhood which they remembered and which may have a connection with the early strong models of teaching and thus a link to what we already know about early modeling and professional socialization (Goodlad, 1984).

THE THEORY

Based on this study and the results it produced, it seems appropriate to advance the theory that outstanding teachers evidence commitment and dedication as a preeminent characteristic of their work ethic or profession. These qualities are not gender specific. Measures of the existence of commitment and dedication include expenses of personal time and personal income. Commitment and dedication are present in mature teachers, suggesting the developmental quality of this attribute. As a consequence, perhaps they can be elicited in teachers and enhanced by appropriate reinforcement interventions.

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